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ABSTRACT

Drawing on demographic data, a variety of sources and abstracted documentation, as well as the work of national scanning panels, this report briefly reviews the following 12 issues facing community colleges: (1) the conflict between the broad requirements of state and federal educational legislation, and the increasingly unique demands placed on individual institutions to address local needs; (2) the decreasing availability of resources to meet people's needs; (3) the growing difficulty in identifying and defining the purpose of community colleges; (4) the increasing demand on institutions to assess their educational outcomes; (5) the casual attitude many students take towards education; (6) the problem of an aging faculty, nearing retirement, with little incentive to become actively involved in change efforts; (7) the need to teach students about the history, culture, politics, and economies of other countries; (8) the problems of finding qualified faculty to fill new vacancies, while providing incentives for older faculty to retire once they can no longer make quality contributions; (9) the ambivalence of many instructors to utilize new educational technologies; (10) the lack of research activity among the majority of community college educators; (11) the absence of a dominant workplace strategy (e.g., agricultural, industrial) which could lead to a dominant educational strategy; and (12) the need to develop consistently applied moral/ethical principles to reinforce a system of lasting beliefs/values. (PAA)

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Critical Issues Facing America's Community Colleges

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January 1992

The Institute for Future Studies

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The Institute for Future Studies at Macomb Community College helps leaders and decision makers create strategic advantage by understanding and capitalizing on the forces compelling change. The Institute scans the environment, tracks trends, conducts studies and identifies issues which have potential for impacting society and the organizations within it.

Macomb Community College is a comprehensive, multi-campus institution of higher education providing services to an annual unduplicated headcount of more than 50,000 students in Southeast Michigan.

Macomb provides coursework leading to associate degrees and specialized certificates. Through its University Center, Macomb Community College also provides access to fifteen bachelors degree programs offered on site by five senior institutions.

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Critical Issues Facing America's Community Colleges

Perspective

This is our third document focused on emerging issues facing America's community colleges. It results from our observations of societal conditions and the systematic trend-tracking program conducted by The Institute for Future Studies at Macomb Community College.

Because most of the issues apply to most of America's community colleges, we have renamed our publication *Critical Issues Facing America's Community Colleges*. We believe the new name more accurately reflects the document's contents.

However, the purpose of the publication remains the same: to stimulate discussions which will encourage all of us to address changes in our societal context with reasoned strategic responses. We also continue with our concise, quick-hitting format because our readers have indicated that it helps stimulate the dialogue and raise the questions which precede creative thinking.

Also unchanged is our belief that any forum for inquiry which is prompted by this document will result in new perspectives and that open exchanges on those perspectives will help pave the way for capitalizing on the opportunities we all hope to encounter on our journey into the future.

Critical Issues Methodology

The content of *Critical Issues* was developed through a comprehensive issues identification process which includes the following activities:

1. Demographic data and information related to advances and discoveries are monitored and recorded.
2. A wide variety of literature and abstracted documentation is continuously and systematically scanned and catalogued in nine "Future Scan" categories. Indicators of radical societal change are also catalogued in twenty "emerging context" categories, and a continuing assessment is made relative to appropriate strategic responses.
3. The contents of major publications of record (including *The Chronicle of Higher Education, Community College Week* and *The Community, Technical, and Junior College Times*) are catalogued on a weekly basis. This material is analyzed from both state and national perspectives.
4. Three national scanning panels continually monitor societal conditions and submit materials for analysis and mapping. In addition, members of the panels periodically react to "thinking in process" materials produced through The Institute for Future Studies.
5. A tentative listing of critical issues is submitted to two panels—one internal and one national—for documentation of indicators and assessment of the potential impact the selected issues will have for America's community colleges.

Although *Critical Issues* is written from a national perspective, its implications for individual institutions should be readily apparent.

The next assignment

Scanning the environment in search of the trends which generate critical issues is an important step in the strategic planning process. It results in "guidance system data" which enables leaders effectively to accommodate radical change and pursue the opportunities it presents. **Critical Issues** is the result of such scanning and trend tracking.

The next assignment is to stimulate debate and propose responses which will enhance the effectiveness of both our own institutions and America's community college system. That responsibility belongs to all of us.

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January 1992

Critical Issues Facing America's Community Colleges

Different Directions 1

Greater Limits 3

Sense of Purpose 5

Documenting Results 7

The Casual Classroom 8

In Line 9

Global Citizenship 10

Double Dilemma 12

Technology Avoidance 13

Research Readiness 15

Strategic Stalemate 17

Ethics and Values 19

Different Directions

Community profiles are becoming more diverse. What flies in Boston can't get off the ground in Los Angeles. And, what plays in Peoria can't attract an audience in Tallahassee.

Since community colleges tend to mirror the communities they serve, America's two-year institutions are becoming more dissimilar. As our communities become even more diverse watch for parallel changes in our community colleges.

This is as it should be. After all, serving the educational needs of local communities is consistent with the core beliefs of the community college concept.

Quite simply, what leads to progress on one campus may result in status quo—or worse—at another.

However, there is a paradox to the different directions our community colleges find themselves headed. While it's important for community college leaders to identify common issues and problems and to share related insights and solutions, the strategic response to opportunity must be situational and personal. Quite simply, what leads to progress on one campus may result in status quo—or worse—at another.

Over the past twenty years we have experienced radical changes. They have been fueled by new social attitudes, global interaction and interdependency, technological leaps forward, and a growing realization of limits. The progression from past to present hasn't always been linear and orderly. It's likely the same characteristics will mark our movement from present to future.

These radical changes have not affected all communities in like fashion. Similarly—and appropriately—these changes have not had identical impact on our two-year institutions.

As radical changes continue to amplify differences, there will be new questions about organizational purpose, routine abandonment of old practices, and a clear need for continuing experimentation and innovation. At the same time, the ability of one community college to borrow from another will diminish. Hence, community college leaders increasingly will find themselves at forks in the road where there are no guideposts.

The continuing common denominator is that all community colleges must remain community-based and locally focused. The new paradox is that the method and degree of response may be as diverse as the communities in which two-year institutions are located.

As community college leaders are left alone to determine which paths lead to harmony between marketplace and mission, they will have to move from planning to pathfinding. Two significant challenges will confront them on the journey:

1. **The framing of public policy.** State and federal programs tend to be broad brush. Because those who frame policies cannot accommodate diverse situations, the result of their work is often a generic proposal for universal and uniform application. Yet, uniform policies often make it difficult for community colleges to respond to their local, highly individual markets. Quite simply, those who frame public policy must recognize that homogenous policies don't work well in heterogeneous environments.

2. **Addressing public opinion.** Community college leaders will have to exert themselves in shaping public understanding of the role individual community colleges must play—an especially difficult assignment in metropolitan areas where common media outlets serve more than one community college district. This aside, the leaders of our two-year institutions should work to help people understand that the programs community colleges provide are unique reflections of community needs. After all, community colleges were designed to be different. ■

Greater Limits

People who have experienced America as a land of abundance are now learning that there are limits. The new paradigm they are encountering presents some issues which are beyond the carrying capacity of our society. There are also other outcomes which are no longer possible or practical, at least politically.

Greater limits remind us that the system cannot be all things to all people.

These growing limitations influence our very being and affect our capacity to adequately accommodate factors as diverse as the environment, the infrastructure—even the quality of our lives.

Examples of growing limitations are evidenced by:

- public understanding that foreign materials cannot be discharged into the air and water;
- realization that elements of infrastructure such as roads and sewers aren't sufficient to support community growth in many areas;
- shortages of capital which restrict the capacity of entrepreneurs to expand, even in the smallest market niches;
- growing awareness that the nature of our economy and workforce will limit the quality of life for many citizens (Opportunities for career-enhancing promotions are not abundant and automatic salary increases will soon become a footnote in economic history.); and,
- blurred visions caused by politicians not clearly seeing the needs of their new mosaic constituencies and not accurately assessing the ripple impacts of the legislation they advocate.

There are also limits being placed on decision-makers by a host of ballot and legislative initiatives, various regulatory agencies, and the increasingly complex processes of our organizational systems themselves.

Our response to these limitations has been slowed by our individual attitudes and organizational styles, both of which have roots in assumptions of continuous growth and incremental resource increases. These assumptions have led us to develop and refine a host of models for allocating resources and managing growth. However, in a period of growing limits these assumptions and techniques leave us without the models we now need—models for collegial retrenchment and for restricting, contracting and reallocating.

Greater limits remind us that the system cannot be all things to all people. While this posture may get one elected (at least for the short haul), it will compound the serious mismatch between what is possible and what is probable.

Community colleges have not been exempt from society's tendency to live beyond means. Demands on organizational resources have always been in excess of capacity. Now, however, community colleges, like other societal institutions, must face the growing limits and reconcile the gap between demand and supply. There are at least three strategic responses which are appropriate:

1. **Develop understanding.** People need to know that there are very legitimate opportunities for improvement which are beyond the resource capacity of our institutions. People need to appreciate that *there are* limits.
2. **Focus.** No institution can be all things to all people. Community colleges must become centers of excellence by identifying what they do best and strengthening those assets.
3. **Collaborate.** Collaboration may be necessary to develop centers of excellence. It will certainly be necessary if we are to provide students with comprehensive educational opportunities. Perhaps networking the centers of excellence is tomorrow's key to excellence in education. ■

Sense of Purpose

America's two-year institutions are charging into the future with a full head of steam. But where they are going may not be discovered until the end of the 1990s.

Created for specific educational purposes and characterized by an open-door admissions policy, community colleges have been marvelously successful. Now, however, directions have changed and the historic social purposes of community colleges may be dissipating.

No longer is the agenda for community colleges clear. And, it's likely their purpose will continue to blur as the waves of radical change get closer and come faster.

Even now some leaders are beginning to reflect on the purpose of our two-year institutions in a changed society.

Even now some leaders are beginning to reflect on the purpose of our two-year institutions in a changed society. There are more questions than answers: How much energy should be devoted to remediation? Who will fund needed technology? What skills are needed in the workforce? Which partnerships are consistent with our mission?

The challenge is stated clearly by the editors of *Policy Perspectives*, a publication of the Pew Higher Education Research Program: "The 1990s are upon us. For the nation's colleges and universities, the decade is likely to prove a troubling end to the century—a time of greater questioning as well as uncertainty."

As community colleges attempt to define their purpose, an adaptation of three questions raised in *Policy Perspectives* provides a starting point:

1. At the national, state and local levels, what are our community colleges expected to deliver, and to whom?
2. What differences should a community college education make in the lives of its students?
3. How much responsibility should two-year colleges have for maintaining the social fabric, securing the economic well-being, preserving the history and culture, and strengthening attitudes and beliefs of the nation, state and local community?

These are tough questions. And, the fact that there are few states with a clear sense of vision for their community colleges will make the answers more elusive.

Public perceptions complicate matters further. While people understand the need for functions performed at the beginning and end of the educational continuum, the middle ground is not well charted.

Everyone knows, for example, that "You have to go to school." This, of course, means elementary, junior high and high school.

People also know that many careers require that "You have to have that piece of paper," referring, of course, to the universities which produce the diplomas doctors, lawyers, accountants and other professionals possess.

But people have difficulty articulating the social purpose of community colleges. This leaves our two-year institutions without a natural constituency. And, without a natural constituency, it's even difficult to develop a groundswell of public support for a clear sense of direction.

Community college leaders should be concerned for at least two reasons:

1. Without a clearly identified purpose, organizations tend to atrophy or consume energy in pursuit of justifying distorted visions. The first results in loss of commitment; the second leads to efficiency at the expense of effectiveness. Both generate mediocrity.
2. When economic turbulence redefines personal reality, people develop uncertainties. These uncertainties, in turn, force them to make choices. And, given a choice between lower taxes and an institution which can't articulate its purpose and social value, the options suddenly become quite clear.

What our two-year institutions are doing and where they are going are legitimate inquiries. They deserve deliberation and response, and a realization that the people asking the questions don't want to find out what the destination is ". . . when we get there." ■

Documenting Results

"Show me!" may be the new directive for the 1990s. There will be a greater insistence on proof of results for the balance of this decade.

Our forecasts during the late 1980s indicated that the documenting of results would soon move from option to requirement. Now accrediting agencies have detailed specific plans for determining whether community college programs are meeting student needs effectively.

The specificity of requirements related to student success will dictate shifting the focus from measures of quantity to indicators of quality.

The new requirements to document results is both appropriate and needed. It will make our community colleges better places to learn.

We should embrace the opportunity to assess ourselves against the common characteristics of effective community colleges.

Management consultant Peter Drucker says the purpose of any human services organization is to bring about some change in a person or in society itself. That aptly summarizes most college mission statements, and it provides an acid test: Does the college succeed in helping people achieve the changes they desire?

We should embrace the opportunity to assess ourselves against the common characteristics of effective community colleges. And we should welcome the opportunity to learn from our attempts to match what we *really* do in our classrooms against the indicators of effective teaching.

Our effectiveness assessments also provide an opportunity to demonstrate institutional performance in the public arena. By publicly explaining our effectiveness in a format and language the public can understand, community colleges can strengthen and expand their constituencies.

There is also good reason to go beyond the requirements of accreditation and conduct assessments of public perception. Just as academic indicators can provide information to strengthen our two-year institutions, so too can measurements of public opinion help community colleges better accommodate the needs of their individual communities.

Assessments of public perception may never be required, yet the characteristics of our new era dictate that we become sensitive to the impact of public opinion. Indeed, the requirement to document effectiveness may be a double blessing—it will help us become more effective in the production of successful students and it will assure that we are judged favorably by the court of public opinion. ■

The Casual Classroom

Whether the cause is ambivalence or lack of focus, both students and faculty are becoming increasing casual about what happens in the classroom.

As a prelude to the next day's absence, every professor has had a student say: "I have to miss class tomorrow. Will you be discussing anything important?" The question signals something symptomatic about student attitudes toward the educational process—that what occurs in our classrooms is of minimal importance unless it is specifically hyped to Big Top status by the instructor.

High standards and clearly articulated expectations must be the norm.

Some students seem to have a "hierarchy of importance" which doesn't include the process of education and the rigor of thought. Caught up in the continuing demands of school, work, play and the incessant need for sleep that characterizes late adolescence, it seems that commitment to education is falling victim to unordered priorities and lack of energy. "I'm tired . . . we won't have to do any work in here, will we?" is a classroom refrain which seems to be coming from a more powerful chorus.

Behaviors such as this can produce inadvertently similar responses from faculty. Sometimes it is easier to ignore high standards, to consider things "good enough," or to inflate grades and avoid the discomforts of explaining that they indicate the caliber of work and tend to be a reflection of effort expended.

The educational community has been in the business of providing credentials for the longest time. Our seal of approval has marked an individual as learned—a competent person prepared to become even more competent. Each credential was a symbol of increasing competence, and it was accepted without question. Now, however, more employers are concerned about human development. They want to know what students have learned and whether they can contribute. Employers are more likely to ignore the credential in favor of discovering how a potential employee can help get the job done. Job interviewers now ask candidates, "What contribution can you make?" It's a question only foolhardy candidates take lightly. Unfortunately, it may not be adequately answered by those who have come from casual classrooms.

High standards and clearly articulated expectations must be the norm. Those who can't see the importance of the related goals or lack the energy to attain them need our counsel. They need to understand that less commitment results in a lesser education. They need to understand that the rigor of their education is related to the quality of the contributions they can make.

Perhaps it's time to get serious about education, and to understand the more you give it the more it gives back.

Unfortunately the inertia of human nature is unlikely to produce a groundswell of consumer demand for greater academic rigor. Clearly then, the first step in recalibrating classroom expectations must be taken by teachers. As the front-line representatives of our noble profession, they can set the tone in very powerful and meaningful ways. ■

In Line

"This too shall pass" is a familiar refrain to those who are in line, waiting for the end. Retirement is in sight, just beyond the next two semesters . . . or 16 board meetings.

Hired in mass to accommodate double digit enrollment increases, most current community college employees lived through the near geometric growth of our nation's two-year institutions. (During the period 1965-1975 more than 500 community colleges opened in America—one per week!) These faculty and staff have been central to providing an unprecedented array of educational opportunities for Americans.

Our diverse audiences care more about how good we are today than how wonderful we were yesterday.

Now many of our faculty and staff members are just a few months or years away from the retirement they've earned. For many the emphasis is moving from the public to the personal, from outward to inward. As they contemplate their final performance, they are consumed with both reflection on the past and preparation for their future.

But the show must go on. Our diverse audiences care more about how good we are today than how wonderful we were yesterday. Yet, there seems to be a growing lack of interest in future-oriented initiatives and the organizational changes they dictate. At the very least, many of our faculty and staff are not easily mobilized to sacrifice for long-term goals. Others are enticed by the retirement system to engage in a short-term personal strategy: to increase their retirement checks by taking maximum teaching loads in their final years.

Short-term focus is a troubling phenomenon in a period of radical change. More than at any time in their careers, the need for staff to change is more evident and more critical.

Yet, there is an inhibiting paradox: while the needs of many employees are short-term, the organizational strategies required to accommodate and capitalize on radical change are long-term. Particularly where the seniority system plays a role in the college's governance structure, there is often a direct conflict between the short-term needs of employees and long-term needs of our institutions.

To establish a balance between employee and organizational needs, more of our committees and decision-making forums should include both younger staff and those who are "in line." In addition, we need to create organizational processes which encourage experienced staff to mentor their younger colleagues so our institutions can continue to build on a foundation of quality.

Now is the time for an adrenalin surge—a burst of energy which will close the curtain on one career with grateful applause and mark the beginning of the next pursuit with a strong sense of anticipation.

As in the past, today's students need to be ignited by enthusiastic, creative, future-focused, flexible, student-oriented staff. Leaving a legacy to tomorrow requires that we rekindle our spirit and push on. ■

Global Citizenship

New coalitions are being formed and new economic entities are being defined while new political alliances are changing the road maps of society. Indeed, the power to create change is becoming a global possession.

Yet, ironically, the more independent nations become, the more interdependent they must be. The same holds true for our organizations and for us as individuals.

United Way's trend-tracking system reports that the audience for products, capital, technology, information and ideas is becoming increasingly common. As communication systems increasingly ignore political and geographic boundaries, the ideas, perspectives and tastes of all people will become even more global. Everyone will be exposed to a smorgasbord of opportunity and opinion.

The integration of cultures will be a by-product of the interactions forced upon us by the communication technologies of satellite transmission, computers, facsimile machines and virtual reality. And, this common audience communication will continue to accelerate the development of a global agenda.

Being a good citizen requires a basic understanding of society and appreciation for its rules.

Regardless of their educational goals, students must leave the community college with a basic understanding of this dynamic new world and their career and lifestyle options in it.

Develping this understanding dictates that students learn the history, culture, politics and economics of other countries.

These lessons should help students appreciate that one of the common denominators in the global village is diversity. People of different ethnic backgrounds, religious beliefs and cultural mores will become more interdependent. Working and socializing in this environment will require increased understanding of this reality. In most cases, alignment with this new environment will require rethinking and readjustment of personal values.

While many people still do not appreciate that *they* are part of a global system, it is becoming quite clear to almost everyone that global interactions can affect individuals everywhere. Personal economics have made the lesson very clear. Just ask any auto or tire industry worker about the Japanese, ask any data entry clerk about the Irish, or ask any machine tool employee about the Germans.

The people with whom we must compete are no longer next door or across town. They can be anywhere on the globe. The people with whom we must cooperate are in the same place.

Being a good citizen requires a basic understanding of society and appreciation for its rules. As our global society evolves so will its rules.

Two-year institutions must begin a concerted effort to adjust to this evolving environment and to help their students understand the interdependence it is creating.

While community colleges are designed to reflect the communities in which they operate, they must also obligate themselves to prepare students for the realities of the global environment in which they will live.

On occasion the kaleidoscope of change comes into focus. When it does it's clear that the global economy will define the power of nations, determine the nature of work, and affect the quality of life everywhere. Adequately preparing our students dictates that we must gather our thoughts and operationalize a syllabus without delay. ■

Double Dilemma

There are two ways to win. There are more ways to lose.

As is the case with many American institutions, community colleges are expected to "turn over" more than half of their employees during this decade. As these employees leave to focus on other pursuits, factors related to demographics, recruiting and the maintenance of educational standards will converge to create a challenge of multiple proportions.

And so a double dilemma pushes questions of quality to a high place on the agenda.

Dilemma One: ***There will be a shortage of well-qualified professional staff during the 1990s.*** Recruiting challenges will result from both demography and the fact that there is no career track leading to community college employment. Many of our two-year institutions will have to scramble to find top-notch faculty and key support staff.

In the short-run, community college planners will consider solutions ranging from lowering credentials to using more paraprofessionals to accelerating the applications of teaching technology.

In the longer run, community college leaders will emphasize their success in attaining vision, mission and goals. They will do this to enhance their institution's reputation, and then they'll use that reputation as an ace in the recruiting game.

Dilemma Two: ***Many faculty members will not retire.*** The demographic forces which create shortages will have reverse political impacts. For example, as we previously forecasted, the mandatory retirement age for college faculty has already been eliminated in some states (and is likely to be eliminated across the nation by 1993). As a result many faculty will keep working. We might expect that a few will pursue their careers beyond reasonable limits and literally die on the job.

While extending careers may help solve the first dilemma, it has potential for creating another. Simultaneously, community colleges may be pursuing new faculty while aggressively searching for incentives which will encourage senior faculty to leave.

And so a double dilemma pushes questions of quality to a high place on the agenda. Outstanding candidates for community college positions are available. But these high caliber people must be convinced to teach at the community college level if high standards are to be maintained.

Similarly, many senior faculty have the capacity to make continuing contributions. Those who can enthusiastically deliver quality instruction and use their depth of experience to benefit students should be permitted to do so.

But on the campus there are people for whom it is time to move on. It is not a question of chronology. It is not even a question of respect. It is a question of maintaining professional standards and our continuing ability to provide quality programming to those who depend on us every day. ■

18

Technology Avoidance

Author and scholar Ernest Boyer credits Arthur Levine for discovering that ". . . the blackboard was first used by a teacher at Bowdoin College about 1823." The blackboard and many other educational "technologies" which followed it are still in use. Perhaps that's why there is no "Museum of Educational Technology."

Peter D. Relic [no pun intended by deciding to quote this writer!] maintains quite convincingly that use of this primitive technology is most appropriate. "If there is to be significant progress in any area [of education] the bottom line will be skills, knowledge, attitudes, and values of classroom teachers. And one big tip-off to brilliant teaching is the use of the blackboard." Relic continues: ". . . the real key [to educational effectiveness] is the relationship between the teacher and the student and what they accomplish together."

Some are open to allowing technology into the classroom. But they use it to do many of the same things faster.

Yet, there is irrefutable evidence that effective teachers can use technology to leverage the teacher-student relationship and geometrically increase what they and their students accomplish together.

Despite this, many faculties are not chomping at the bit to use technology.

Some are open to allowing technology into the classroom. But they use it to do many of the same things faster. Much as bookkeepers have used both quill pens and computers to keep ledgers, too many faculty use technology to track attendance, score tests, record grades or perform other traditional tasks.

Few faculty desire to use technology to change the concept of the classroom. Fewer still have asked our institutional technocrats to help them invent ways to improve the instructional process, even if it changes the concept of the classroom.

The delivery of content seems tied to mass instruction (lecture) delivered in audio format (voice) with an occasional visual (on the blackboard or its electronic counterpart, the overhead projector). Of course, there is nothing wrong with this. Some of the most insightful, thought-provoking, participative learning has resulted from chalk talk lectures.

But technology can leverage the capacity of the classroom by magnifying the impact of lecturers who are skilled at the blackboard. Technology can bring movement and sound and color. It can speed things up or slow them down. It can provide individual attention and serve as a stimulus to group discussion. It can expand thinking beyond the bounds of the classroom. Indeed, it is already delivering real time access to the world.

Technology holds the promise of making us better than we already are. That alone is reason to determine what is holding us back. Is it fear of technology? Fear of change? Fear of the unknown? Or do we simply lack the organizational processes needed to initiate and nurture collaborative ventures by our technology and curriculum specialists?

Independent entrepreneurs, borrowing from technological successes in the private sector, may be an external force which drives us to undertake a technological restructuring of how we do what we do. Whatever drives the change deserves our embrace. After all, it's uneducational to resist any initiative which promises to enhance human capacity.

Those who resist technology hold back the inevitable. They delay the anticipated advance, the promised breakthrough, the next discovery. They limit the relationship between teachers and students and what they can do together. They perform a disservice contrary to the very essence of education. ■

Research Readiness

Research is not something we do. And it's not something we use either. We need to assess our readiness on both counts.

Perhaps community college faculty and staff have been so focused on teaching and responding to educational needs in their local communities that they haven't had time to do research.

A study by the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA indicates that only three percent of community college faculty members spend a significant portion of their time conducting research or writing.

. . . community college faculty are uniquely positioned to conduct important research related to the learning process.

While the faculty and staff now working in our two-year institutions know the most about the community college environment, they are making minimal contributions to the body of knowledge about teaching and learning at the post-high school level. This is unfortunate because community college faculty are uniquely positioned to conduct important research related to the learning process. For example . . .

1. Collectively, community college faculty teach the majority of American adults enrolled in degree credit programs. Hence, their classrooms are fully equipped laboratories waiting to be used in studies of the behaviors of adult learners and the effectiveness of related teaching methodologies.
2. Community college classrooms are the most diverse in the nation in terms of age, ethnicity, academic preparation and other factors which can affect learning. These classrooms are often mirrors of local communities which reflect a host of research possibilities, from the relationship between economic well-being and achievement to age as a factor in the practical application of theoretical concepts.
3. Community college faculty—across all disciplines—may possess the greatest balance between academic preparation and practical experience. This attribute provides credentials for studying diffusion of research findings in the workplace, bringing "real world" perspectives to business partnerships, developing custom-designed educational programming, and a host of other needs.

The issue is not whether research should be required of community college faculty. To the contrary, we see research and experimentation not as a requirement but as an opportunity which community college faculty can use to simultaneously renew and advance the profession.

There is also a second dimension to the issue of research at the community college level. Arthur Cohen, respected author and Director of the ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges at UCLA, reports that community college professionals are less than avid consumers of research. Cohen says existing systems can easily handle a ten-fold increase in capacity. Quite simply, we are not using what is available.

It appears that there is room for initiative on both sides of the information equation. We can be better teachers if we use what is already available. And, we can be better teachers and advance the cause of learning if we begin contributing to the body of knowledge. ■

Strategic Stalemate

One hundred years ago the average American was a 22-year-old white male who worked on the farm. He had a fifth grade education.

Fifty years ago the average American was a 29-year-old blue collar worker who toiled in our factories. He had a ninth grade education.

The agricultural and industrial eras in which these average Americans worked had a common denominator: there were clear expectations for public education and a good fit between the needs of the workforce and the programming of the schools.

. . . there is no dominant workplace strategy and, as a result, there is no dominant educational strategy.

The industrial era demanded just a little more of the schools than the agricultural era. In addition to some educational basics, employers wanted workers who were obedient, could handle routine work, didn't have to think too much and understood the importance of being on time. And so the educational strategy was adjusted to match the workforce strategy. As a result, industrial era schools stressed discipline, drill and practice, not questioning elders and being in your seat ". . . by the time the bell rings."

Today the average American is a 35-year-old female who has completed, on average, one year of college. But for her both the educational and workforce strategies seem unclear. The result is a chicken-egg stalemate.

On community college campuses across our nation there is growing debate relative to whether the educational strategy should be specific or general; i.e., should community colleges provide a variety of highly specialized, "vertical" programs or should they provide a core curriculum augmented by very few specialized programs? It seems we aren't sure which course to take.

One reason for our uncertainty may be the lack of fit between the needs of the workforce and educational programming. While it's obvious that the educational needs of today's workers are different from their agricultural and industrial era counterparts, it is unclear what kind of workforce the educational system should produce for the information era.

The complexities of the stalemate are compounded by the shifting (and sometimes conflicting) strategies firms use to cope with change.

Some firms still favor a basic strategy we might call "crack the whip." These organizations believe they can increase productivity with reliable, honest employees who give "an honest day's work for an honest day's wage." Industrial era educational programming supported this strategy.

Other firms embrace the strategy of exporting work. Their goal is to cut labor costs by transporting work to places where you can get an honest day's work at a great price. Education of the workforce is not a consideration for businesses on this track.

A third strategy relates to the application of technology, and there are three basic ways to implement the technology strategy:

1. Replace people with machines (technology). This requires little more than educating a few people to operate (and fewer still to repair) machines.
2. De-skill workers so they can work with machines. Often the employee's assignment is to "Call us if the red light flashes." This tactic requires educating the workforce so they have the skills to cope with boredom.
3. Educate workers to use machines as tools which amplify human capacity. This tactic dictates educational programming of the highest level.

But there is no dominant workplace strategy and, as a result, there is no dominant educational strategy.

A recent publication jointly produced by the American Society for Training and Development and the U.S. Department of Labor warns that ". . . the new economy is still a series of different possibilities contingent upon a wide variety of choices. Once the choices have been made the nation will be wedded to a dominant configuration of markets, strategies, organizational structures, job designs, and skill utilization."

Making the informed choices which will enable our nation to be a player in the new economy dictates that we break the strategic stalemate. ■

Ethics and Values

Inside trading, bank failure, cheating, government scandal...even the loss of heroes in sports and entertainment—all are fueling a value-centered self-examination of how we can move from where we are to where we want to be.

Our pursuit of better tomorrows seems stalled on the realities of today. In our quest to define truth, what we are discovering is neither black nor white. What we are learning is that good and bad depend on the perspectives of the viewer, and that right and wrong are no longer absolutes.

We also are discovering that the heterogeneity of our society—let alone the global village—is characterized by a multiplicity of values. And, as these diverse value systems collide with increasing frequency, the need for guidance becomes more evident.

Quite clearly, what's going on outside is forcing us to take a new look inside.

Quite simply, there are grave inconsistencies between what we say and do. Quite clearly, what's going on outside is forcing us to take a new look inside.

We find ourselves frustrated by the uncertainty surrounding decision-making ethics in our society and our two-year institutions. Many people, we are discovering, are not aware that the application of ethical principles to daily decision-making is governed by a hierarchial process:

- First, a system of lasting beliefs (values) must be present.
- Second, existing values must be translated into decisions about what is right and what is wrong (morals).
- Third, methods for applying a mosaic of moral principles (ethics) must be developed.
- Finally, consistently applied moral principles (ethics) must reinforce the system of lasting beliefs (values).

In this cyclical model, the inability or unwillingness to be concerned about what is right and what is wrong produces disagreement over ethical standards. And, obviously, when ethical standards are nonexistent or out-of-focus, there can be no reinforcement of lasting beliefs.

We are seeking guidelines against which we can measure right and wrong, good and bad, decent and inappropriate. We have hope that such behavioral benchmarks will provide solutions to our ethical dilemmas.

Perhaps we should begin by displaying the mosaic of moral principles which exists in our society. Next we should move from the common ground to developing an understanding and reconciliation of differences. Then, as an enlightened society, we should define the parameters of favor and disfavor and specify the boundaries of acceptability.

We know values can't be legislated or mandated. So we must listen to the scholars who tell us that ethics have their foundation in the earliest years of life—that family contributes most to what will grow into an adult belief system.

We must think both short- and long-range. As the leaders of community colleges, we need to establish and clearly communicate our ethical principles. That will help our institutions perform

more harmoniously today. Then our ethical principles must be modeled for future generations. We must support, for example, any initiative which leads to stronger families and the building of stable belief systems. That will help us better accommodate tomorrow.

There is no question that concern for ethics and values will manifest itself in two important ways for our nation's community colleges:

1. In our curriculum planning, we can anticipate discussions centered on whether instruction related to ethics has a place in the curriculum.
2. Organizationally, we can expect to debate the components of an institutional code of conduct (ethics).

The search for ethical high ground will not be an easy assignment. At least for now, we can take comfort in knowing that a host of individuals and institutions in both the public and private sectors are trying to do the right thing. ■